

## LANGUAGE, CULTURE, COMMUNICATION

INTEGRATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ESP  
LESSONS FOR STUDENTS MAJORING IN IT**Svitlana Bortnyk**

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**Summary**

The article examines intercultural communication as a key component of modern professional and educational environments, particularly in the context of globalization and digital transformation. It emphasizes that communication processes have always accompanied human interaction but have gained special significance due to increased international cooperation and migration. Intercultural communication is presented as an interdisciplinary field studied across various sciences, including linguistics, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies.

Special attention is given to foreign language teaching as a tool for developing intercultural competence. Each language learning process is viewed as interaction with another culture, where the focus shifts from purely grammatical knowledge to functional and practical language use. The article highlights the importance of linguo-cultural and cross-cultural approaches, which contribute to a deeper understanding of discourse, pragmatics, and cultural differences.

Furthermore, the paper identifies key linguistic and communicative skills required in professional environments, particularly in the IT sphere, such as technical writing, effective digital communication, presentation skills, and cross-cultural awareness. It outlines common challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, and misinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal signals, and suggests strategies to overcome them through training, practice, and the use of modern educational technologies.

The article sums up that integrating linguistic and intercultural competencies into education is essential for preparing competitive specialists capable of effective communication in a global professional environment.

**Key words:** cross(inter)cultural communication; foreign language teaching; linguistic competence; professional communication; IT communication; language pedagogy; globalization; communication barriers; intercultural competence.

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## 1. Introduction

The study of communicative processes is one of the most relevant issues for humanity at the present stage of societal development. Intercultural (or cross-cultural) communication as a phenomenon has accompanied humanity throughout its entire history (trade, marriage relations, diplomacy, conflicts, etc.). This phenomenon has gained particular importance due to globalization, digitalization and intensive migration processes. In the United States, a professional association called the Society for Intercultural Communication Training and Research was established in the 1960s; later, similar organizations appeared in Europe, and specialized academic journals began to be published. In the 1980s and 1990s, the linguo-cultural approach to foreign language teaching actively developed (*Hall, 1966*), (*Hall, 1976*), (*Bennet, 1993*). In applied linguistics and language pedagogy, such concepts as cross-cultural discourse studies, cross-cultural pragmatics, comparative cultural studies, and cultural lexicography emerged. Intercultural communication characterizes not only interaction in the fields of art, tourism, and everyday life, but most importantly – which is the main focus in non-philological education – communication at a specific professional level (*Hofstede, 2001*), (*Piller, 2010*), (*Bennet, 2008*), (*Byram et al., 2018*).

Intercultural communication can be defined as a process of interaction between representatives of different cultural communities, in which participants are aware of cultural differences and take them into account in the course of communication. It involves the exchange of information, emotions, and ideas among individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds. In the modern educational context, particularly in higher education, the issue of intercultural communication has gained special significance, as it is directly related to the development of professional communicative competence in future specialists. The key objectives of this field comprise preventing communication breakdowns caused by cultural differences and to develop effective strategies for overcoming them.

One of the main tasks of language pedagogy today is the development of an effective model for teaching foreign languages in the context of intercultural communication, since every foreign language lesson represents practical interaction with another culture through its primary carrier – language. The main emphasis is placed on teaching the functional aspects of language and on the more practical application of foreign language skills.

Intercultural communication is studied within various academic disciplines, including cultural studies, linguistics, ethnology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, cybernetics, and folklore studies, as well as at an interdisciplinary level, which makes it possible to comprehensively analyze its nature, mechanisms, and consequences (*Manakin, 2012*), (*Cambridge, 2013*), (*Spencer-Oatey, 2008*).

It should be emphasized that even when a common language is used, communication participants do not always interpret the meaning of messages in the same way, which may lead to misunderstandings (*Maltseva, 2002*). Such difficulties become more pronounced in intercultural settings, where differences in values, social norms, and communication styles act as sources of communication barriers. This highlights the need for a deeper study of the mechanisms underlying effective intercultural interaction and the development of relevant competencies.

**The aim of this study** is to analyze effective methods of developing intercultural communication in the process of learning a foreign language (English). The aim of this article is to generalize the pedagogical experience of teachers working with IT students in the context of developing intercultural communicative competence. To achieve this aim, the following *objectives* have been defined:

1. To analyze the features of intercultural communication and its phenomenon.
2. To identify the main difficulties faced by students in the process of intercultural interaction.
3. To substantiate and propose effective methods for developing intercultural communication and overcoming intercultural stress.

**The object of the study** is the process of developing intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education.

**The subject of the study** includes methods, approaches, and pedagogical conditions for fostering intercultural communication in the educational environment.

**Methods:** The study employs general scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, and generalization, which made it possible to examine and systematize scholarly works devoted to the study of intercultural communication. In the course of the study, contemporary scholarly sources dealing with the development and dissemination of intercultural communication in the educational environment, particularly in higher education institutions, were viewed. An important component of the research was the authors' own practical experience in teaching ESP to students of technical major, as well as organizing and conducting extracurricular cultural and educational activities, and also, which is crucial, personal experience of working with foreign companies.

## 2. Development of Intercultural Communication in the Global Digital Environment

The development of intercultural communication in the context of the global digital environment is characterized by a rapid transformation of communication forms, channels, and dynamics, where digital technologies serve as a key instrument of interaction. Digitalization eliminates geographical boundaries, making intercultural interaction a routine practice in business, education, and social life.

The concept of "intercultural communication" in its narrow scientific sense emerged, as it was mentioned, in the second half of the XX century, when researchers began to focus on analyzing communication breakdowns and their consequences in interactions between representatives of different cultures. Over time, the scope of this concept has significantly expanded to include such fields as translation studies, foreign language teaching methodology, comparative cultural studies, and other related disciplines. Contemporary research in intercultural communication focuses on patterns of human behavior in situations shaped by culturally determined differences in language use, as well as on the impact of these differences on the communication process.

*Foreign language teaching and intercultural communication* are closely interconnected, as language serves not only as a means of information exchange but also as a tool for understanding the world, shaping thought, expressing emotions, and fulfilling communicative needs. The ability to engage in intercultural dialogue is an essential component of the professional training of modern specialists, since effective communication requires overcoming not only linguistic but also cultural barriers. (Prus et al., 2025), (Prykhodko, 2016)

The process of socialization cannot be considered outside the linguistic environment, as it is through language that individuals acquire the values, norms, and behavioral patterns characteristic of a particular culture. Thus, learning a foreign language involves not only mastering lexical and grammatical structures but also engaging with a different cultural worldview. Each foreign language lesson can be viewed as a practical implementation of intercultural

communication, where linguistic units reflect culturally determined meanings and national perspectives. (Byram et al., 2002), (Bakum et al., 2018).

Within the higher education system, the implementation of the dialogue of cultures is achieved through the integration of the intercultural component into the teaching of the discipline “Foreign Language” in general sense. It may be either an ESP course (English for Special Purposes) or Business English, or General English. This approach not only contributes to the development of students’ understanding of cultural differences but also fosters a tolerant attitude toward representatives of other cultures. At the same time, it encourages awareness of the value of one’s own national identity, culture, and traditions. The intercultural aspect of language training shapes students’ perception of the dialogue of cultures as a fundamental model of coexistence in a modern multicultural society, based on the principles of mutual respect, openness, and tolerance. (Kostiuk et al., 2019), (Trompenaars et al., 2012), (Halytska, 2014).

From a practical perspective, the effective integration of the *intercultural component* into foreign language teaching promotes a positive attitude toward cultural diversity and develops readiness for constructive interaction, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution. At the *macro level*, intercultural communication enables the understanding of other cultures through their literature, art, and other forms of cultural expression, thereby contributing to mutual enrichment. At the *micro level*, it is realized through the interpretation of social, ethnic, religious, and other cultural knowledge and practices in the process of direct interaction.

It should also be noted that in the context of intercultural interaction, particularly in international business communication, participants’ behavior is often shaped by their own experience and intuitive perceptions of appropriate conduct. In the absence of adequate intercultural training, communication participants tend to rely on the norms of their own culture without considering the specific cultural context of their partners, which may lead to misunderstandings and reduced effectiveness of cooperation.

### 3. Key challenges of intercultural communication

Thus, among the key challenges of intercultural communication, the following can be identified:

*Language barriers.* Despite the widespread use of English as a global lingua franca, linguistic difficulties remain a significant obstacle to effective interaction. Differences in language proficiency, as well as culturally specific features of language use, such as metaphors, idioms, and regional variations, may lead to misunderstandings even when participants possess formal linguistic competence. For example, one of the problems is polysemy and contextual meanings. Many English terms have multiple meanings depending on the context: the word “drive” can mean both a physical device (for example, a hard drive) and a process (“drive the project”). When translating computer terms, it is important to correctly determine the context and choose the appropriate translation option. Choosing the wrong meaning can significantly change the meaning and cause confusion. It is worth mentioning that different levels of language and their corresponding units possess varying degrees of cultural richness and cultural conditioning.

*Crosscultural differences.* Divergent values, traditions, communication styles, and social norms can become sources of conflict and misunderstanding in intercultural interaction. For instance, differences in attitudes toward hierarchy, gender roles, perceptions of time, and emotional expression can significantly influence decision-making processes, negotiation strategies, and business operations;

*Stereotypes and prejudices.* Cultural stereotypes may considerably complicate intercultural communication, as they tend to oversimplify perceptions of individuals and groups and do not always reflect reality. Both negative and positive stereotypes can shape biased attitudes toward interlocutors, hindering mutual understanding and reducing the effectiveness of cooperation;

*Non-verbal communication.* Differences in non-verbal elements, such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, interpersonal distance, and other physical cues, may result in misinterpretation of intentions or emotions. These differences are particularly significant in intercultural business and diplomatic contexts, where non-verbal signals play a crucial role in building trust and conducting successful negotiations. It is important to consider that the interpretation of non-verbal means of communication is culturally determined and may vary significantly depending on the national context (Burgoon et al., 2016). For example, in Germany, students may express their approval of a lecture by tapping their knuckles on the table, whereas in the United States this is more commonly expressed through applause. At the same time, the “OK” gesture, which carries a positive meaning in American culture, may be perceived as inappropriate or even offensive in certain European countries, including Germany. This highlights the necessity of developing intercultural awareness in order to prevent communication misunderstandings. Such physical contacts as handshake and touch are common form of greeting in Europe and USA, while in the Middle East there is a limited contact, especially between genders. Smile in the USA and Europe shows friendliness and positivity while in Japan it may mask embarrassment or disagreement.

*Psychological barriers and stress.* Participants in intercultural communication may experience stress or psychological discomfort due to cultural adaptation and the need to modify habitual patterns of behavior. This can lead to decreased interaction effectiveness or even conflict, especially if one party feels pressure or uncertainty caused by cultural differences.

*Information asymmetry.* In the context of globalization, differences in access to information, education, and technology may create asymmetry in communication between cultures. Variations in the level of technological development or access to global networks can result in one party being less informed or having limited opportunities to participate fully in communication processes;

*Ethical differences.* Divergences in ethical principles, moral values, and legal norms across cultures may lead to significant discrepancies in approaches to business practices, conflict resolution, or service provision. Different perceptions of honesty, fairness, or equality can hinder the achievement of consensus or the conclusion of agreements;

*Digital barriers and online etiquette.* Although digital technologies facilitate the development of intercultural communication, their use also introduces new challenges, particularly those related to adapting communication strategies to the online environment. Online communication has its own specific rules and barriers associated with the absence of physical presence, which may complicate the transmission of subtle non-verbal cues and create additional difficulties for mutual understanding .

As it is seen, intercultural communication is a complex and multifaceted process that encompasses not only linguistic and cultural barriers but also psychological, social, and technological aspects that must be taken into account to ensure effective international cooperation.

#### 4. Non-verbal barriers

As for non-verbal barriers, here the difficulties of communication participants may arise when transferring symbols, their incorrect understanding by one of the partners, after which problems arise with their meaning. At the same time, it should be remembered that each nation has its own interpretation of non-verbal means of communication.

Non-verbal communication barriers usually include:

*visual barriers* (physical features, gait, facial expression, posture and changing postures, gestures, visual contact, psychological distance). In Japanese culture, avoiding direct eye contact is considered important, as prolonged eye contact may be interpreted as a sign of aggression or disrespect, whereas in Western cultures it is often associated with openness and sincerity. In France, considerable attention is given to facial expressions and emotional expressiveness, which may be misinterpreted by representatives of more reserved cultures. In Middle Eastern countries, personal distance and gender-specific norms of interaction play a significant role; for instance, physical contact between individuals of different genders in public may be considered inappropriate. Furthermore, gestures that are neutral in one culture may carry negative or even offensive meanings in another;

*acoustic barriers* (intonation, timbre, volume, pitch, speech pauses, etc.) which may be of utmost importance during online communication; Pause in conversation in the USA may cause discomfort but in Japan it is a natural part of communication, sign of respect.

Last two types of barriers, *tactile sensitivity* (handshakes, pats, kisses, etc.) and *olfactory barriers* (smells), are significant in offline communication.

So, taking into account the cultural specificity of non-verbal communication, it is a necessary condition for effective intercultural interaction, as it helps to avoid misunderstandings and contributes to building mutual trust among communication participants.

#### 5. Intercultural Communication in the IT Sphere: Challenges, Strategies, and Practical Cases

Intercultural communication in the IT sphere refers to the process of professional interaction between specialists belonging to different national, linguistic, and cultural communities. In the context of globalization and digital transformation, it has gained particular importance, as it directly affects the efficiency of international projects and the performance of multicultural teams. Such communication involves not only verbal interaction but also adaptation to different models of professional behavior, management styles, decision-making approaches, and the use of specialized IT terminology.

Among the key challenges of intercultural communication are cultural barriers manifested in differences in business practices, values, and professional norms. Various communication styles also play a significant role: some cultures tend to prefer direct expression of opinions, while others rely on indirect communication, which may complicate mutual understanding and feedback exchange. Professional IT vocabulary is another essential factor, as it ensures accuracy and clarity of information transfer but requires an appropriate level of language proficiency. Additionally, localization and content adaptation are crucial when entering new markets, as they require consideration of linguistic, cultural, and social characteristics of the target audience.

### 6.1. Key trends and features of digitally mediated communication

*Transformation of formats:* A shift from traditional face-to-face verbal communication to digitally mediated interaction through social networks, video conferencing platforms, and messaging applications.

*Active participation:* The digital environment promotes an activity-based approach (collaborative projects, commenting, virtual exchanges), transforming communication and learning from reproductive to reflective processes.

*Increased speed:* The pace of information exchange has significantly accelerated, requiring immediate responses and rapid adaptation to the cultural characteristics of communication partners.

*Impact on the business sphere:* Digital technologies play a crucial role in cross-cultural management, enhancing interaction efficiency and reducing the significance of national borders.

### 6.2. Challenges of digitalization in intercultural communication:

– *Risk of semantic distortions:* Due to the absence of non-verbal cues (facial expressions, gestures) and the use of automated translation tools, the risk of misinterpretation of messages increases.

– *Linguistic and sociocultural barriers:* Despite technological advancements, differences in digital etiquette and cultural norms remain significant obstacles.

– *Context reduction effect:* Online communication often lacks deeper cultural context, replacing it with simplified and standardized patterns.

Overcoming these challenges is possible through the systematic development of intercultural competence, which includes familiarization with cross-cultural communication principles and the formation of effective communication skills. Another important factor is the implementation of unified communication standards and approaches, as well as the improvement of participants' language proficiency in professional interaction.

Effective intercultural communication contributes to strengthening the position of Ukrainian IT companies in the international market by ensuring open dialogue, mutual understanding, and the reduction of stereotypes. In cooperation with foreign partners, it is essential to consider linguistic environments, business etiquette, and cultural expectations. In some regions, for example, English is widely used alongside the state language as a medium of international communication, while formal communication norms and personal relationships remain highly valued. Moreover, differences in mentality may influence the pace of communication, decision-making processes, and workflow organization, requiring flexibility and adaptability from all participants

## 7. Practical Aspects of Intercultural Communication in IT: Examples and Case Studies

The practice of international IT companies demonstrates that the effectiveness of intercultural communication directly influences project success. For example, in global teams at Google, significant attention is paid to creating an open communication environment that encourages clear expression of ideas and constructive feedback, which helps minimize misunderstandings among representatives of different cultures.

Another relevant example is Microsoft, where training programs on intercultural interaction are actively implemented for employees. These programs teach staff to take into account differences in communication styles across cultures, particularly the distinction between direct and indirect expression, which is crucial for effective teamwork.

In the IT outsourcing sector, such as at EPAM Systems, situations often arise where Ukrainian developers collaborate with clients from the USA, Europe, or Asia. One common issue is the different understanding of deadlines and expectations regarding deliverables. For instance, Western cultures typically emphasize strict adherence to deadlines, while in other cultural contexts time may be perceived more flexibly. This necessitates clear agreement on cooperation terms and the use of standardized project management tools.

One of the examples is international startups, where teams are often distributed across multiple countries. In such environments, a common working language (usually English) and digital communication platforms are essential. However, even with a shared language, difficulties may arise due to differences in terminology interpretation and communication styles, highlighting the importance of developing intercultural competence.

Thus, the presented examples demonstrate that intercultural communication is not merely a theoretical concept but also a practical tool that determines the effectiveness of interaction in the modern IT industry. Successful companies place significant emphasis on developing relevant skills among their employees, which helps to reduce communication barriers and improve the quality of collaborative work.

In addition to linguistic and etiquette-related factors, cross-cultural characteristics of educational and professional environments significantly influence the effectiveness of intercultural interaction. Differences in the perception of teacher and student roles are particularly important, as in some cultures they are expressed through a more hierarchical model of interaction and a higher level of respect for authority. Cultural factors of motivation also play a significant role, influencing attitudes toward learning, levels of independence, and student engagement. Additional difficulties arise due to different learning and communication styles, which may complicate the development of effective dialogue in the educational process.

An important instrument is communication localisation, including the adaptation of linguistic and terminological resources in educational and marketing materials. The implementation of modern instructional design approaches and the development of e-learning courses tailored to the cultural characteristics and digital competence level of the target audience also play a crucial role. The combination of these measures increases the effectiveness of intercultural interaction and improves the quality of educational products.

So, in the context of globalisation and digital transformation, intercultural communication has become a decisive factor in the professional activity of IT specialists. It is no less important than technical knowledge, as it ensures effective interaction in international teams, reduces the risk of misunderstandings, and supports the successful implementation of projects. It has been established that the *main challenges include language barriers, the complexity of professional terminology, and cross-cultural differences in communication and learning styles.*

Consequently, improving the quality of professional training for future IT specialists requires the *integration of linguistic and intercultural components into the educational process, the use of modern digital technologies, and the adaptation of curricula to the demands of the global labor market.* The implementation of these approaches will contribute to the development of competitive professionals capable of working effectively in an international environment and successfully interacting with representatives of different cultures.

## 8. Conclusions

A defining feature of contemporary society is the active interaction of cultures, manifested not only in dialogue but also in processes of cultural interpenetration. This contributes to the formation of a global sociocultural space in which the ability of an individual to adapt to diverse cultural environments becomes particularly important. In this context, language plays a key role as a means of socialization, professional development, and integration into society.

To overcome communicative barriers at the professional level, various *training programs* should be conducted and diverse *teaching methodologies* ought to be developed. The development of *professional discourse courses* with an emphasis on sociocultural aspects should be an integral part of the educational program. Actually, this very article is an attempt to consider the problem in an interdisciplinary manner and find acceptable options for its solution.

Intercultural communication in the digital space functions as an essential tool for the development of international relations, business, science, and education, necessitating a higher level of cross-cultural competence among professionals.

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